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S E R M O N S

ON THE

E F F I C A C Y

OF

PRAYER and INTERCESSION.

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CAMBRIDGE.**

Τί τῇ τῆς φύσεως ἀνάγκῃ τὸ πρᾶγμα ὑποβάλλεις; Chrysost.

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SEPMON
ON THE
EFFECTS
OF

RAYNER and INTERCESSION



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S E R M O N I.

MATTH. vii. 7.

ASK, AND IT SHALL BE GIVEN YOU.

THE husbandman, desirous of a crop in the time of harvest, betakes himself to the use of such means as have been found to answer : He turns his field with the ablest hands, he adds the richest manure ; though he knows not, and will modestly own he knows not, why the accession of such foreign matter, or the breaking of a clod is so indispensably necessary to the propagation of a grain of barley.

But we, who should teach you to cul-

B

tivate

John iv.
36.

tivate that more valuable part of your possessions, the mind, and gather *fruit unto life eternal*, are apt to talk in a higher strain; and not apprehending any danger of experiments in this case to confute us, at least for the present, we lay down our decisions with the greater confidence. We expatiate on the ideas of rectitude and obligation, free-will and fate, and substance, corporeal, spiritual, and everlasting; till the world and it's adorable Author, his attributes and essence, his power and rights and *duty* (I tremble to pronounce the word) be all brought together to be judged before us; who stand, like infants, in admiration of the paper-fabrick we have raised, and see the universal frame of nature within the little lines which we have drawn in the dust.

Not that speculations on such subjects are in themselves wrong: then alone they become dangerous, when carried to excess;

cess; when they engage perhaps too much of our attention; when in proportion as our light fails us, our presumption increases; when we grow fond of erecting systems and theories; when we are no longer in ignorance or doubt on any point, nor know things any more in parts, but all things universally, with all their relations to every other subject, and as they make a part of the whole; when we will leave nothing unexplained; and in one word, when we lay greater stress on these notions of our own, than on the universal sense, and general sentiments, and maxims of mankind.

Indeed, the consequences of these conceits in Religion, and of this vain Philosophy, are not always so bad in fact, as might be apprehended from the absurdity of them. Common sense and nature, though distorted by this violence, are making continual efforts to recover their

bent and figure, and prevail frequently in practice against any theory. Just as, alas! on the other hand, natural temper and passion exert themselves with great power against the best arguments, and gain daily victories over well-grounded resolutions, and the lawful authority of the strictest reason.

Among other subjects, that of PRAYER has suffered from the indiscreet endeavours that have been used to explain it.

Matt. vii.

7.

The Scripture saith, *Ask, and it shall be given you.* The plain meaning of which words must surely be, That Almighty God may be moved by Prayer. Now if it should happen, that we cannot well explain how this is done, it may still be true: and if we have laid down such laws for the regulation of the Divine Government, as will not admit this doctrine, we must alter them till they will.

If

If indeed we *ask amiss*, that is, with a James iv.
 design to consume the divine gifts upon ^{3.}
 our lusts, the Scripture tells us, that this
 will hinder the efficacy of our prayers;
 nay, that *the prayer of the wicked is an a-* Prov.
bomination unto the Lord. xv. 8.
xxviii. 9.

Should we even pray without this evil design, or with a very good one; still there may be many reasons, why we may not obtain that which we pray for. It might not be truly good for us, however ardently we desire it; it might be injurious or detrimental to other persons, or creatures, in a manner of which we have no suspicion, nor even idea; it might oppose some of the rules of Divine Government, of which we know little; or be even a thing impossible, when we fancy it the easiest.

Yet we are not therefore to conclude, that even these prayers are lost and use-

less, because they are so far unsuccessful. They may obtain for us other blessings instead of that which we desired, and perhaps greater and better: the piety and faith that are express in our prayers, whatever error we may have fallen into concerning the subject of them, must be acceptable to our heavenly Father, and tend to procure for us higher degrees of his favour, itself the greatest of all blessings, according to the Psalmist, *Thy loving kindness is better than the life itself.* And Prayer, as it is the exercise of a devout temper and disposition, will naturally encrease in us that disposition, and make us more religious and better men.

Pf. lxxiii.
3.

This last consideration, as it is of great weight, so is it also of a very large extent; there being no faulty temper of mind, but what may be brought to the test and corrected by devotion; nor any part of the character of a good man, which

which by this exercise may not be made better.

While you *give thanks* to Almighty God your heavenly Father for all the instances of his liberality and mercy ; acknowledging that you owe to him your life, and health, and all things ; that you have deserved nothing from him but punishment, while he is loading you with benefits ; that every moment of comfort in your life is the gift of him, against whom you have committed so many offences ; that he watches over you, when you think not of him ; and, when you knowingly displease him, he is ready to forgive ; that he has given up his own and only begotten Son, who was in the bosom and glory of the Father, to a life of pain and sorrow, and a death of ignominy and anguish, that you might be freed from the punishment justly due to your evil deeds, and be made happy and

glorious to all eternity with himself in heaven; while you give him thanks in this manner for his goodness, your hearts, surely, must burn within you with the sense of it: if you were not thankful before, such thanksgivings must make you so: they will beget that pious disposition in you, from which these thoughts might naturally flow, till your minds and words devoutly accord with each other, and you feel all the sentiments of gratitude and love which you express.

Or when you apply to your heavenly Father for *mercy and forgiveness*; deploring your manifold violations of his holy laws; taking shame for your own weakness, folly, depravity; acknowledging not only his dominion over you, and absolute right to your most entire obedience, but the purity and excellence of his commands, in themselves most equitable, productive of good to all, necessary
for

for your own welfare, for your health, peace, prosperity, and honour, and for the enjoyment of your own mind within, banishing the terror of death, filling the heart with hope and assurance, and leading to everlasting felicity; when you confess your offences against such laws as these, and yet beg to be forgiven by him who seeth the heart, and is both a witness and avenger of hypocrisy and falsehood; and when you plead with the Father through the merits and intercession of his Son, who suffered willingly for your sins, and was offered for you a sacrifice to God upon the Cross; when you do this, you take the most effectual method to make yourself a fit object of the divine mercy and forgiveness. Every one of these sentiments, which you thus breathe forth in his presence, is reverberated back upon your own breast, and melts it down into repentance, and amendment.

It

It appears then, that prayer is an employment of the greatest use, having a natural tendency to amend the heart; and by consequence, it is a most important and necessary part of the duty of every person.

Though this be indeed true, and sufficient to satisfy the most scrupulous, that prayer is not a mere ceremonial, serving but to sooth the superstitious, amuse the ignorant, or employ the idle; but on the contrary, a reasonable service, and one of the natural means of moral and religious improvement; yet it doth not seem to be the whole account of this subject, nor even the most obvious way of considering it. These advantages of prayer, however considerable, arise from it indirectly, and as it were by reflexion. Certainly, when a plain Christian retires to his closet to beg the blessing of his Maker, the alteration which his prayer will

will make in his own mind is not the effect he thinks of, or expects from his devotions.

Nay, if this be indeed all that he is to expect, and he be made to comprehend it; the discovery, it is very possible, may be attended with inconvenience, a diminution of that very advantage which is supposed to be his only one. The earnestness of his prayers may be checked, by the recollection of the design of them; and his fervor cooled, by the very consciousness that he is only endeavouring to excite it.

There is something delicate in the nature of the affections and passions; which are found ready enough to rise, and exert themselves in all their strength upon the appearance of their proper objects: they wait for no other signal; but are each in order in their stations, and prepared

pared to execute the parts allotted them in the œconomy of nature. But if there is any apprehension of design or art, any suspicion, as it were, spread among them of an intention to draw them out for other purposes than their own; they become reserved and backward, cold and lifeless in their operations; and, in short, discover in every respect the symptoms of an unwilling obedience.

A studied, affected, fictitious passion betrays itself even to the by-standers: and much more must it be known, surely, to my own heart, whether I feel a sentiment springing up naturally within me, or am only labouring artificially and deceitfully to excite it.

S E R M O N II.

M A T T H. vii. 7.

ASK, AND IT SHALL BE GIVEN YOU:
SEEK, AND YE SHALL FIND.

YOU may remember a little ancient fable to the following purpose. An old man upon his death-bed, said to his sons as they stood round him, I am possessed, my dear children, of a treasure of great value, which, as it is fit, must now be your's: they drew nearer: Nay, added the sick man, I have it not here in my hands; it is deposited somewhere in my fields; dig, and you will be sure to find. They followed his directions, though

though they mistook his meaning. Treasure of gold or silver there was none; but by means of this extraordinary culture, the land yielded in the time of harvest such an abundant crop, as both rewarded them for their obedience to their parent, and at the same time explained the nature of his command.

Our Father, who is in heaven, hath commanded us in our wants to apply to him in prayer, with an assurance of success: *ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find.* Now, it is certain that without his immediate interposition, were his ear *heavy*, as the scripture phrase is, *that he could not hear*; there is a natural efficacy in our prayers themselves to work in our minds those graces and good dispositions which we beg of the Almighty, and by consequence to make us fitter objects of his mercy. Thus it is, that we *ask, and receive; we seek, and, like the child-*

Isai. liii.
1.

children of the sagacious old husbandman, *find* also the very thing which we were seeking, though in another form: our petitions produce in fact the good effects which we desired, though not in the manner which we ignorantly expected.

But yet, allowing this consideration its full force, there is no necessity of stopping here, and confining the power of prayer to this single method of operation. Does the clear assurance of its use in this way preclude the hopes of every other advantage? Must we needs be made acquainted with all the efficacy of every thing that is our duty, and know the whole ground and reason of all the actions which Almighty God can possibly require of us?

When the Israelites under the conduct of Joshua were commanded, upon
hear-

hearing the sound of the trumpet, to
 Chap. vi. shout *with a great shout; and the wall fell*
down flat, so that the people went up into
the city, every man straight before him, and
they took the city; was the reason of this
 command, and the operation of the means
 to be made use of, understood by all that
 were concerned? Was it the undulation
 of the air, think you, the physical effect of
 many concurrent voices, that overthrew
 the walls of Jericho? or, suppose the
 people were commanded to shout in token
 Heb. iv. of their Faith; (for it was *by Faith*, as
 30. the Apostle speaks, *that the walls of Je-*
richo fell down;) which way is it that
 Faith operates in the performance of
 such wonders?

You will say, no doubt, that these
 were wonders, and the case miraculous;
 and that we are not from such extraordi-
 nary events to draw conclusions concern-
 ing the general duties of Christianity.

The

The drought, that was in the land of Israel in the time of Elijah, I suppose no one will deny to have been miraculous.

Yet we have the authority of an Apostle to conclude from it in general, that good men's petitions are efficacious and powerful.

Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that James v. 17.

it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. What is this brought to prove?

That the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. And is this the

Apostle's argument? The prayer of the Prophet produced first a famine, and then plenty in all the land of Israel; and if you, Christians, exercise yourselves in confession and prayer, the disposition of your minds will be the better for your devotions.

But the prayer, concerning which St. James is speaking, may seem to you to

C

be-

belong to the same class with that of Elijah, and to be the prayer of men that could work *miracles*.

Phil. iv.
6.

Hear another Apostle: *Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.* The plainest places in the Scripture will be mysteries, if the sense be this, that we can expect no help from God in our distresses; but may try, by acts of devotion, to bring our own minds to a state of resignation and contentment.

Matt. vi.
11.
Matt. x.
29, 30.

Give us this day our daily bread. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father. The hairs of your head are numbered. Can the meaning of all this be, That God Almighty made the world; that it is not to be altered; and we must take the best care we can of ourselves, while we live in it?

King

King Agrippa, believest thou the Prophets?
 said the great Apostle, arguing with equal solidity and eloquence in defence of that capital doctrine, The resurrection of our Lord from the dead. He desired no other concession, than the belief of the Scripture: on this foundation he undertook to erect the whole fabrick of Christianity.

Do you believe the Scriptures? If not; it is to no purpose to stand disputing concerning the duty of Prayer, or any other duty commanded in the Gospel. We must rather return back to the first principles of religion, and lay again, as the same Apostle speaks, the foundation of *faith towards God*.

Heb. vi.
1.

But there is no occasion for this: you are desirous to go on to perfection; admitting the truth of Christianity, and believing the Scripture to be the word of God.

S E R M O N II.

The Scriptures teach you, that our Lord Christ being crucified, dead, and buried, the third day he rose again from the dead. Now this is a great and astonishing *miracle*: it is a thing of which we have no experience: it is against all our rules and observations; and directly contrary to the established order of the world, and the course of nature. Yet you believe this.

The Scriptures also tell you, that hereafter your own bodies in like manner shall be raised from the grave, and stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. This event too, whenever it shall take place, will surely be another most amazing miracle, brought about by no rules or laws that are made known to us, or ever fell within the limits of our observation and experience. Yet we believe it; and live, or should do, under the influence of this persuasion.

The

The same Scripture, to which we give credit, while it records past miracles, is equally intituled to our assent, when it predicts, as in this instance, miracles to come.

Suppose then the Scriptures were to acquaint us, that there are miracles performed at this present time; but either at such a distance from us, or else in such a latent manner, that we could not know by experience, whether they were wrought or no; still there could be no room to doubt: a ready assent must be yielded to such a revelation by all who believe the Scriptures.

Now if the Gospel teach us doctrines, from which the existence of these miracles may be inferred; or if it command duties, in which these interpositions of Providence are supposed or implied; it does enough to prove the reality of them,

though we see them not, any more than we see yet the resurrection of the dead; or, than we did ever behold any of those miracles, which were performed by our Lord when he was here on earth.

There appears to be no difficulty in this matter, to those who believe that any miracles were ever wrought, that is, who believe the Scriptures to be true; nor any inducement or occasion to put ourselves to trouble in giving hard interpretations of texts, or forced and unnatural explications of any part of our duty, in order to avoid, what can be no impediment in the way of a Christian, the acknowledgment of God's government and providence, his particular interposition, and continual operation; as it is written, *my*

John v.
17.

Father worketh hitherto, and I work.

How magnificent is this idea of God's government! That he inspects the whole
and

and every part of his Universe every moment; and orders it according to the counsels of his infinite wisdom and goodness, by his omnipotent will! whose thought is power; and his acts ten thousand times quicker than the light; unconfused in a multiplicity exceeding number, and unwearied through eternity!

How much comfort and encouragement to all good and devout persons are contained in this thought! That Almighty God, as he hath his eye continually upon them, so he is employed constantly in directing, in *doing* what is best for them. Thus may they be sure, indeed, that *all things work together for their good*. They may have the comfort, of understanding all the promises of God's protection, in their natural, full, and perfect sense, not spoiled by that *Philosophy* which is *vain deceit*. *The Lord is, truly, their shepherd*; not leaving them

Rom. viii.
28.

Coloss. ii.
8.
Pf. xxiii.

them to chance or fate, but watching over them himself, and *therefore can they lack nothing.*

What a fund of encouragement is here, as for all manner of virtue and piety, that we may be fit objects of God's gracious care and providence, so particularly for devotion! when we can reflect, that every petition of a good man is heard and regarded by him, who holds the reins of nature in his hand. When God, from his throne of celestial glory, issues out that uncontrollable command to which all events are subject, even your desires, humble pious Christians, are not overlooked or forgotten by him. The good man's prayer is among the reasons, by which the Omnipotent is moved in the administration of the Universe.

How little is all earthly greatness! how low and impotent the proudest monarchs,
if

if compared with the poorest person in the world, that leads but a good life! For their influence, even in their highest prosperity, is only among weak men, like themselves; and not seldom their designs are blasted from heaven for the insolence of those that formed them:

Is not this great Babylon, that I have built Dan. iv.
by the might of my power, and for the ho- ^{31.}
nour of my majesty? While the word was
in the King's mouth, there fell a voice from
heaven, saying, the Kingdom is departed
from thee. But the poor man's prayer pierceth the clouds; and, weak and contemptible as he seems, he can draw down the host of heaven, and arm the Almighty in his defence, so long as he is able only to utter his wants, or can but turn the thought of his heart to God.

is compared with the poor man in
the world; and he is not a good thing
for that reason, even in that respect
prosperity is only among, and men
like themselves; and not below their
dignity as placed from heaven for the
instance of those that remain below.
It is not the great blessing that I have said is
in the sight of my Father, and for that
reason of my Father, which the Lord has
in the Kingdom, I will tell a story from
Proverbs, saying, the Kingdom is departed
from thee. But the poor man's prayer
pleads in the clouds, and work and con-
temptible as he seems, he can draw
down the host of heaven, and arm the
Almighty in his defence, so long as he
is able only to utter his wants, or can but
turn the thought of his heart to God.

S E R M O N III.

A C T S xvii. 27, 28.

THAT THEY SHOULD SEEK THE LORD, IF HAPLY THEY MIGHT FEEL AFTER, AND FIND HIM; THOUGH HE BE NOT FAR FROM EVERY ONE OF US: FOR IN HIM WE LIVE, AND MOVE, AND HAVE OUR BEING.

THERE seems to be a tincture of the Epicurean doctrine, unobserved, perhaps, by themselves, in the notion of those persons who tell us, that it is a more excellent and godlike thing to create a world that shall be able to subsist

sist of itself, and perform, unassisted, every intended operation, than to produce such a system as calls for the continual interposition of it's Creator.

It is convenient, indeed, for *man* to have his little works subsist without his help; because he cannot help them without difficulty, and expense, and often not at all, as in distant places at the same moment: his attention is care, and his work labour; he is oppressed with weight, and distracted by variety. But to apply these ideas to God's government of his rational creatures, is surely to dishonour both Him and them: it is at the same time to degrade the freedom of their will to mechanism, and to ascribe their imperfections to the Almighty.

If there be no trouble, disturbance, or difficulty to the Godhead in interposing in the affairs of men; why should we
question

question his agency? or be so anxious to ease him of what is no burden?

But do you suppose, that the supreme Being is continually working miracles?

The Scripture supposes, or rather asserts, that he is not an unconcerned or indolent spectator of what passes in his world: *can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him, saith the Lord? do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord? The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers. The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth them, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. He keepeth all his bones, so that not one of them is broken. It is the same God that worketh all in all.* But which of his works you will please to call *miraculous*, is a point which, after all, may depend upon yourselves.

For,

For, supposing a course of nature carried on according to general laws; if you call every act of Divine interposition a *miracle*, it is admitted that these interpositions obtained by prayer are miracles.

But if you name only those acts miraculous, by which the supreme Being causes, in the course of nature, an alteration discernible to men; then you see, on the other hand, that his interpositions are not always miraculous; and then only become so, when they are to be known and distinguished.

Nor is it inconceivable, that there should be innumerable events of a *middle* nature, I mean such, concerning which it cannot be *known*, but is left to be *conjectured*, with more or less probability, as the case may be, whether they are, or are not, the effects of the particular will
of

of the Almighty, changing or directing the course of nature.

For his Works bend not at our presence; but go forward in their own train, regardless of human praise or censure; and being the offspring of Wisdom, are content to be judged by Folly.

Or possibly, it may be the very *intention* of the Author of all things, and a particular purpose of his, to keep these acts of his Providence in the degree of uncertainty in which they appear; as for reasons known to himself, so also for the better conduct of his moral government over us; in the same manner as in many other material points, he neither instructs us with certainty, nor yet leaves us wholly ignorant.

And as to this *course of nature*, of which we hear so much, we are in absolute

lute and utter ignorance concerning the manner in which it is formed: it consists, perhaps, of continual and yet distinct acts of the supreme Being, proceeding every one from a perfect free-will, and the most deliberate choice; so that those, which we call the most miraculous interpositions, may be no way distinguishable, in the cause, from the most ordinary events, but only in the novelty of the appearance to us.

Or perhaps, on the contrary, (for these suppositions are thus multiplied, to shew on every side the amazing extent of our ignorance, stretched out like a dark thick mist to an infinite distance, and covering the Universe with an impenetrable veil;) as we know not how any thing is done from its beginning, and can see but a few of the links nearest us in that chain, which reaches from everlasting to everlasting; who may take
upon

upon him to say, that the *course of nature* itself, though carried on with the most perfect uniformity, and without fresh interpositions of Divine Power, might not be seen to comprehend, could we view a larger portion of it, what we now esteem the greatest miracles? The shooting up of a plant, in the eye of superior Beings, may be not more *natural*, than the Resurrection of the dead.

Let us then, at length, be wise enough to acknowledge our ignorance of the ways of God; and leave these dark disquisitions, in which they who are not only ignorant but vain, *feel after*, but Acts xvii. never find him, though he be not far from ^{27.} every one of us. *The Lord is nigh unto all* Pf. cxlv. *them that call upon him; yea, all such as* ^{18.} *call upon him faithfully.* How little soever they comprehend either of his nature, or his operations, they are sure not only of his presence, but protection.

D

He

Pf. cxlv.
19.

He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him; he also will hear their cry, and will help them; whether visibly or no, effectually; either by means that mix themselves unobserved with the course of events, as the small drops of rain are mingled imperceptibly with the current; or else, descending with such abundant marks of his power and presence, that all men that see it, may say, This hath God done; for they shall perceive that it is his work.

Pf. lxiv.
9.

What sentiments of tenderness, admiration, and humility, ought we to feel, when we reflect, that the great Lord of the universe deigns to lend an attentive ear to the supplications of men! that he considers their wants and desires; and will do that which is best, and best for *them*; perhaps, what they ask; if not, what they would ask, if they knew what he knows!

And

And not only good men; *sinners* also may hence conceive hopes suitable to their state; and encouragement, not to continue in their sins, but to repent of them, and call earnestly upon God for mercy and forgiveness: since he is ready to hear and to pardon; both to remit to them the eternal punishment of their sins in the world to come, and to suspend, avert, or turn into blessings the present judgments, which he had prepared, and denounced against them.

Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. But the people believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, and cried mightily unto God. And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them, and he did it not. Jonah iii.

There can be no doubt, but that virtue

tends naturally to the preservation and establishment of a state, and vice to its destruction: and is that cold maxim, think you, all that can be learnt from this astonishing event? Publick vices are frequently found to be detrimental to civil societies: was this all that the prophet Jonah had to deliver, when he cried, *Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown?* And a reformation of manners, is generally speaking, and all things considered, of use towards the preservation of a community: was this the wise philosophical reflexion made by the King, when he *arose from his throne, and laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes, and said, Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?*

Or is not the true meaning of this history, that which is also the most obvious? That Almighty God, in his justice
and

and goodness, offended first with the sins of the people of Nineveh, had decreed and prepared for them an exemplary punishment; and then moved by their repentance and prayer, put a stop to the execution of it. *God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them, and he did it not.* The punishment, had it been inflicted, would have been the effect of his displeasure: it was averted or delayed by the interposition of his mercy.

and goodness, offered first with the sin
 of the people of Thineity, had desired
 and prepared for them an extraordinary
 punishment, and then moved by their
 repentance and prayer, put a stop to the
 execution of it. Obedience of the law
 that he had laid that he would be true that
 and he did it not. The punishment, had
 it been inflicted, would have been the
 effect of his displeasure: it was averted
 or delayed by the interposition of his

mercy.

S E R M O N IV.

LUKE xi. 8.

THOUGH HE WILL NOT RISE AND
GIVE HIM, BECAUSE HE IS HIS
FRIEND; YET BECAUSE OF HIS
IMPORTUNITY, HE WILL RISE AND
GIVE HIM AS MANY AS HE NEED-
ETH.

WHENCE arises the mighty
merit of Prayer, if this be the
recommendation so particularly power-
ful? *Ask, and ye shall receive:* Why are we
not rather commanded to *labour*, that we
may *deserve*? Or how, in short, shall we
reconcile God's undoubted regard to de-

sert, with the concessions he is represented as making to importunity?

Matth.
xx. 15.

This may deserve to be considered: for though Almighty God be the master of his own favours; and free, surely, to bestow them wheresoever he pleases, without assigning to any one a reason, besides his own will; according to that of the householder in the parable, *Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?* and though, whenever he has been pleased to annex any conditions to be performed on our parts, or appoint means to be used, as prayer, or any other, we have no choice left, but to comply, and be thankful; yet when we are able to go further, and can discern, in some degree, the reasons on which such divine appointments are grounded, our meditations will be well and profitably employed on such a subject. The wisdom of the supreme Governor must, in

in any case, be contemplated with delight and admiration ; but with devotion also and gratitude, when it is his wisdom in that part of his administration under which we live, and in those laws by which ourselves are governed.

First then, when our heavenly Father lends a gracious ear to the *petitions* of his children, He is not inattentive to their *behaviour*, or regardless of their merit. If you be a good man, your good works, you may be sure, are all treasured up in his remembrance, and will be brought forth, in due time, to your everlasting triumph.

Secondly, You are not to lay aside your *endeavours*, when you have recourse to your prayers : you are to be as diligent and prudent, as if all depended on yourself ; and as devout and earnest, as if your own endeavours, without God's help,

Prov. xvi. 9. help, were insignificant; as they are. *A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps.*

Thirdly, Much less, when you pray, are you to throw away your piety and religion; which were a strange contradiction: but rather you are to be very religious and holy, that your petitions may be the more efficacious. The power of prayer is to be added to that of a *pious life*: it is the *fervent prayer of a righteous man that availeth much*: while, *the sacrifice of the wicked is abomination*; how much more, *when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?*

James v. 16.

Prov. xxi. 27.

Fourthly, Prayer, or it deserves not the name, has in it's composition some ingredients, *in the sight of God*, and in the eye of reason also, of great price: particularly two.

The

The one is *Faith*: *The Lord is nigh* Pf. cxlv. 18.
unto all them that call upon him; yea, all
such as call upon him faithfully. Without Heb. xi. 6.
Faith it is impossible to please him: for he
that cometh to God, must believe that he is,
and that he is a rewarder of them that di-
ligently seek him. Abraham believed God, Gen. xv. 6.
and he counted it to him for righteousness; Rom. iv. 3.
was pleased with it, as he is with every
thing that is right, and good, and ex-
cellent, and that in proportion to it's
goodness; or even esteemed such Faith
in him as the fulfilling of all righteouf-
ness: as it is, indeed, both intrinsically
right, and the great principle from which
all righteousness springs.

Almighty God is not the object of our corporeal sight: Yet it were absurd to address ourselves to one, that has no Being, or is not present, or cannot help, or concerns not himself with our affairs, or is inflexibly resolved to be our ene-
my.

my. When we pray therefore, we suppose that there is nothing of all this; but, on the contrary, that he has a true and real Being, and is every where present through the whole world and universe; we perform this duty, *as seeing him who is invisible*. When we pray, we believe that God hears the supplications of those that call upon him; that his power is infinite; that the frame of nature is of his making, and still in his hand; and that he hath respect unto his own work; is not only beneficent and liberal, but patient and of great pity, ready and desirous to forgive those that return, and reward those that seek him. Now these thoughts and sentiments with respect to the supreme Being, are both right in themselves, and honourable to him; and, together with those which more particularly belong to revealed religion, (reliance upon his promises, the acknowledgement of his overflowing infinite

infinite mercy in Christ Jesus, and of his grace in the mission of his Spirit, and the expectation and ardent desire of that spiritual everlasting felicity brought to light by the Gospel,) they make up the substance of a just way of thinking upon the greatest and most important subject in the world; and are the foundation of the most exalted affections, which knit the heart to God, and fill it with his love: and is it strange, that prayer, which supposes these thoughts, flows from them, expresses, cherishes, and inflames them, should be a duty well pleasing to that gracious Being, who loves, and desires to be beloved by us? or, that he should appoint it as one of the means of obtaining his approbation, and all those blessings, whatever they be, supernatural or common, of the world to come, or of this present, pertaining either *to life or godliness*, which he bestows in the wisdom 2 Pet. i 3.

dom of his providence, as the effects of his favour?

There is also *humility* in prayer: and this is another strong recommendation of it to him, of whom it is so often written, that *he resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.*

James iv.
6.

1 Pet. v. 5.

Prov. iii.

34.

: It may seem to require a very small degree of the grace of humility, to acknowledge that God is stronger than man: but it is the humility and contrition of the *heart*, that gives force to prayer; and this either in *prosperity* or *distress*.

The hardest task is to be humble in prosperity: when every thing succeeds beyond your most sanguine expectations, to ascribe nothing to yourselves, to your own conduct, sagacity, merit; to look up

up to the supreme Disposer of events with an eye of gratitude, expressive of the deepest sense, both of his goodness, and your own unworthiness.

To thee, Lord, be all the praise and glory for every thing we possess. Thou, in truth, art the only possessor of all: and we have severally such portions of what is thine intrusted to us, as thou in mercy and wisdom see'st meet. We are only what thou art pleased to make us, except so far as we are wicked: and to thee is owing every event that befalls us, but the just punishment of our evil deeds, which we must impute to ourselves.

Us indeed thou sparest; *thou hast prepared* Ps. xxiii.
a table before us, anointed our head with 5.
oil, and our cup is full: yet remember we our offences together with thy goodness; how little we have deserved, while we receive so much. We desire to be thankful, obedient, humble; to love thee, who
hast

1 John iv. 19. *hast first loved us; and, as thou didst*

love us in deed, and not in word, to live to thee, and for the good of others, whom we would assist and comfort, as thou hast made us able, and do to them as thou hast done to us. The higher thy favour raises us, the more we bend; hearkening to the desires and wishes of the lowest of those, who are thy children,

Prov. i.

32.

Father, in common with ourselves. The prosperity of fools shall destroy them. O let not our wealth produce intemperance, or avarice; our power, pride; our authority, insolence; success, security, and forgetfulness of God. 'Tis not without awful apprehensions, that we reflect even upon thy goodness. The stream of divine bounty by which we live, let us not be overwhelmed by it; and undone

Pf. cxxx.

4.

by that mercy which is with thee, and for which thou art to be feared.

The sentiments and supplications
suit-

suitable to a state of *distress* are expressed in few words by him, who was the greatest example at the same time both of suffering and submission. He who *was* Joh. i. i. *in the beginning with God, and was God,* being become man, and about to be betrayed, forsaken, blasphemed, and crucified, though he could have commanded all the Hosts of Heaven, utters but these words, *Father, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.* Matt. xxvi. 39.

in the year 1776, the first of the month of July, the Continental Congress, then sitting in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, adopted the following Declaration of Independence, which was signed by the members of the Congress, and by a number of the people of the United States, and was then read aloud to the people, and was received with great acclamation.

When the Congress had adopted the Declaration of Independence, they then proceeded to the signing of the same, and the members of the Congress, and a number of the people of the United States, signed the same, and the Declaration of Independence was then read aloud to the people, and was received with great acclamation.

S E R M O N V.

J O B xlii. 10.

THE LORD TURNED THE CAPTIVITY
OF JOB, WHEN HE PRAYED FOR
HIS FRIENDS.

AMONG the several competitors
for the Throne of a certain an-
cient Kingdom, in order to put an
amicable end to the contest, and at the
same time to refer the decision of it in
some sort to Heaven, it was agreed, that
He should be the successful candidate,
who should first behold the rays of the

rising Sun.* So while the rest were gazing with their eyes fixed on that part of the horizon where they expected the great Luminary of the Day, the God of Persia, to ascend; one of the number bore away the royal prize by turning his face toward the west. He discovered a stream of the Sun's beams by reflection from the summit of a mountain, or the pinnacle of a temple, before any part of his orb was yet visible by a direct light.

This story has the appearance of a little allegory, rather than of true history: and it is possible, the meaning may be this; that he who carried the crown in that competition, succeeded by not appearing too forward and eager in the pursuit. He modestly declined, he turned his face away from that great dignity; and for this very reason, it met him with

* — Eumque potissimum, quasi acceptissimum diis, qui solem orientem primus vidisset. Justin.

with the more willingness. The things which we desire the most ardently, are not always to be demanded eagerly. Extreme selfishness is often the cause of its own disappointment. The greedy go away unfed; while he that *scattereth, increaseth*, and the liberal are loaded with good. Prov. xi. 24.

The Lord appeared unto Solomon; and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. And Solomon said, Thy servant is in the midst of thy people whom thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered, nor counted for multitude: give therefore thy servant an understanding heart. And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life, neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies, but understanding to discern judgement; Behold, I have done according to thy words; lo, I have given thee a wise and understanding heart: and I

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have

have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honour.

How charming is the contest between Beneficence and Modesty! the liberal hand, and the disinterested bosom! Even the receiver divides the glory with his divine Benefactor; and his generous concern for others, returns with accumulated benefits and blessings upon himself.

Attend to the example of Job. Under the pressure of his great calamities and afflictions, he applied himself, and no wonder, to God by prayer; and being a good man, we may be allowed to suppose, that his petitions were not fruitless. But the petition which atchieved his recovery, or, however, that which he was offering up at the moment in which it pleased Almighty God to accomplish it, was a petition for *other persons*. It is writ-

written, *The Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends.* Job xlii. 10.

How signal is this instance of God's dispensations! what lustre doth it reflect upon that part of our applications to him, which we allot to the benefit of our brethren. You observe, that this eminent pattern of piety and of patience had been both frequent and earnest in his supplications in his own favour; complaining, pleading, and, like another Jacob, wrestling with God. *O that my grief were thoroughly weighed! it would be heavier than the sand; and my words are swallowed up. O that I might have my request, that God would grant me the thing that I long for! Why hast thou set me as a mark against thee? I will speak in the bitterness of my soul; Is it good unto thee, that thou shouldest oppress? that thou shouldest despise the work of thine hands? Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me* Job vi. 2. & al.

as clay; and wilt thou bring me into dust again?

Job xvi.
6. & al.

Job, we see, was sufficiently vehement in his own behalf: and yet, as if his expostulations were all in vain, *Though I speak, saith he, my grief is not asswaged: and though I forbear, what am I eased? God hath delivered me up to the ungodly. He breaketh me with breach upon breach. My face is foul with weeping, and on my eyelids is the shadow of death. I have said to corruption, thou art my father; to the worm, thou art my mother and my sister. God hath overthrown me: I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard; I cry aloud, but there is no judgement.*

Not that this was strictly true; or that his petitions even for himself were utterly without effect. God Almighty had mercy in store; though he kept it back from him all the long time that he was making
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ing the most pathetic supplications for himself, and then bestowed it when he began to pray for others: *The Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends.*

Nay, these very friends, as they are here styled, hardly merited so favourable an appellation; accusing him of crimes he had not committed; and upbraiding him with those punishments of his sins, which were, indeed, the trials of his virtue. And he was sensible of all the bitterness of their reproaches: *Ye overwhelm the fatherless; ye dig a pit for your friend. If your soul were in my soul's stead, I could heap up words against you, and shake mine head at you. But I would strengthen you with my mouth; and the moving of my lips should assuage your grief. He teareth me in his wrath, who hateth me: he gnasheth upon me with his teeth: mine enemy sharpeneth his eyes upon me.*

Job vi.
27. & al.

Yet

Yet was it required of Job to become the intercessor for these very persons, and to beg for them the forgiveness of those offences, which had been committed against himself. And then, at last, after this illustrious testimony of his charity, added to those of his patience and piety, when his virtues were thus brought to the height, and appeared in all their glory; then it pleased the wisdom and mercy of God, breaking forth out of obscurity, and made conspicuous by his judgments, to restore, and double his prosperity.

Now this practice of making intercession to Almighty God in favour of others, must naturally be of use to the petitioner; if it be of any use to him to have his mind improved in virtue, in the most generous and noble dispositions, and every sentiment that belongs to the great principle of Charity. He cannot
but

but increase his benevolence, while he gives this proof of it, and mixes it with his religion. When he is supplicating the throne of Grace in behalf of other men, for all manner of blessings for them, temporal, spiritual, and everlasting; can he wish them evil? or ever after *do* it?

Doth the same fountain send forth sweet water, and bitter? Can rancour consist with such petitions, and dwell in a heart that is capable of these thoughts and desires? Whatever be the event of his supplications with regard to those, who are the subject of them; they cannot come back empty: his requests for them will at least be successful for himself, and *his* *prayer return into his own bosom.*

Pf. xxxv.

13.

Indeed religion, and the exercise of any part of piety, has a natural tendency to quell those tumults, and curb that selfishness of the mind, which are the sources of injustice. The mere reflection,

tion, that we are God's creatures, as other men are, and depend upon him as they do, and must be judged by him along with them, and enter so soon upon a state of never ending felicity or punishment; these reflections must always tend to cool our contentions about little matters, to reduce us to order, and, in short, to make us *do to others, as we would they should do to us*; which is a description of the whole of our duty to them. But when to these general sentiments of piety and equity, we add those tender feelings, which will naturally arise within us while we make ourselves intercessors with our common Father for some particular person among our brethren, one, it may be, who has meant or done us wrong, who pursues us with injuries undeserved, with calumnies unprovoked; we shall then learn the power of such prayers better than by words; shall be no longer *straitened*, as the Apostle speaks, *in our own bowels*:

els: our hearts will be enlarged, to correspond, according to our measure, with the divine charity; till we apprehend that, for which also we are apprehended; catch the same spirit, by which the Redeemer was moved to lay hold on us; and know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.

Phil. iii.
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Eph. iii.
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S E R M O N VI.

I T I M. II. I.

I EXHORT, THAT FIRST OF ALL,
SUPPLICATIONS, PRAYERS, IN-
TERCESSIONS, AND GIVING OF
THANKS BE MADE FOR ALL MEN.

THE social affections, which lead
directly to the general good, are
the sources of the highest satisfaction to
the individual; and the devotions and
prayers, which are offered up to God for
others, are those which bring down the
greatest graces and blessings on the peti-
tioner. You do not wonder to find fea-
tures of resemblance between Morality
6 and

and Religion, two very nearly related, as well as inseparable companions.

A wise man, therefore, would cultivate in his mind a regard to others, were it only out of respect to himself; and a pious Christian is frequent in the exercise of intercession, for the amendment of his own heart, and the increase of his happiness, both naturally, and by the divine blessing. We are content to persuade men to mutual kindness, upon any principle; and bring them into a happy habit of generosity, whatever may be the motive to it. The harshness that is in the original seed, may wear out by cultivation, and the root of Selfishness yield the fruits of Love.

However, both to do justice to the doctrines of Scripture, and give pleasure to the generous mind, we may safely add, that there is yet another argument
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in recommendation of this duty of Intercession; and that is, the welfare and happiness of those persons, who are the subject of your prayers. There is ground to hope, that *they* may reap benefit from this act of your charity, and be rewarded openly for the petitions which you put up for them in private.

Yes surely; and what occasion for this caution? (as a plain man might be apt to argue;) for if my intercession can be of no use to them, why do I make it? For your own sake, replies the philosophical Christian, and for the exercise and improvement of your charity. — Can my *charity* be employed, when all the benefit is to be confined to myself? Is it charity, to introduce into my prayers the *names* of other persons, without any view to their advantage? — Why, yes: because, speaking of them as persons to whom you wish well, you bring your
F mind.

mind to a better temper towards them; and learn to take pleasure in their welfare, though you do nothing to promote it: you will, indeed, be the readier to promote it yourself, if ever it should be in your power; but you expect no addition to be made to their happiness, in consequence merely of your desire of it.

But if this then, might he not ask, is to be my real aim and intention when I am taught to pray for other persons, why is it that I do not plainly so express it? Why is not the form of the petition brought nearer to the meaning? Give them, say I to our heavenly Father, what is good: but this, I am to understand, will be as it will be, and is not for me to alter. What is it then that I am doing? I am desiring to become charitable myself. And why may I not plainly say so? Is there shame in it, or impiety?

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with your heart, by which Christians are

ceiving?

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these

these interpretations? a mixture of that philosophy, which the Apostle Paul joins with *vain deceit*; by which Christians are *spoiled after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world?* I fear, in another place says that great and truly learned Apostle, *lest as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ*: that amiable Character, which attends alike both upon *Truth and Virtue*; which is seen with so much approbation in a Christian's *life*, and equally adorns the doctrines of his *Gospel*.

I exhort, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority: — Why? — that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. Is it a peaceable heart only, and a loyal temper, think you, that we are to cultivate in ourselves
by

by such supplications and prayers? Or do we put up these petitions to the heavenly King, in hopes that the Kings of the Earth at least, may hear of them; and, by this artful management of our devotions, we may obtain from them what we seem to ask of another hand? Or what other unnatural interpretation have you, in order that all may be performed according to the *course of nature*?

Or can you take up, at last, with this plain sense; grounded, however, upon another text of Scripture? That since *the King's heart is in the hand of the Lord, and he turneth it whithersoever he will,* Prov. xxi. 1, we therefore pray that he will so turn it, that Christians who lead their life in godliness and honesty, may be allowed also to lead it in quietness and peace.

But can we suppose the supreme Being thus violently to invade his own works,

and overrule the minds of his creatures whom he hath made *free*? where henceforth is their blame or merit? and where his justice?

Pf. ciii.

14.

Ezra ix.

13.

Leave we this to him, who *knoweth whereof we are made*, and punisheth us always *less than our iniquities deserve*. He will not require *brick* without affording *straw*, nor call us to answer, but so far as he knows we are accountable.

The doctrine of *human liberty* is a subject attended with many other difficulties; and, indeed, is to a very great degree inexplicable: yet is this no disturbance to us; but in our commerce with each other, we proceed without scruple, and without danger, under the persuasion of it,

And as the belief of *Man's Freedom* is admitted in the conduct of human life;
the

the doctrine of the *Divine Providence* is not less essential to religion. There may be difficulties here too; and no wonder, on such a subject; the nature and government of the infinite Being; his decrees established from eternity, his foreknowledge that cannot err; his will controlling all, and his justice punishing the wicked. Points like these, of which we must needs conceive very imperfectly, may be *explained*, till they become *contradictory*; and then raised up into gigantick objections. Which if we have dexterity enough to deal with, by the help of similar weapons, and the same learning of words, it is very well. But these difficulties, if they cannot be answered, must be overruled. It is neither so easy, nor so important, to be able to unravel such intricacies, as to *hold fast the form* ^{2 Tim. i.} *of sound words*. Almighty God is the ^{13.} original Author of our life and happiness; for which we are obliged to him. He was the true, the only proper Agent

Pf. cxxi.

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Pf. xxxiv.

15.

in the first formation of Things; and is still employed in the preservation, and government of what he made. *He slumbereth not, nor sleepeth. His eyes are over the righteous, and his ears open to their prayers.* And this not only when they pray for themselves, but for other persons: persons absent, and unacquainted with what is doing in their behalf; who yet, whether you can explain it by physical causes or no, receive real benefits and blessings from the merciful Providence of God, and through the prayers and piety of good men. Of this there are many instances upon record in Holy Scripture: the precepts of our Lord, and the duties of our religion suppose and imply it: it is contrary to no truth made known to us by experience, or reason: and we must hold it as an acquisition too valuable to be given up to the clamour of Infidels, or the obscure speculations of the metaphysical Believer.

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S E R M O N VII.

JAMES v. 16.

PRAY ONE FOR ANOTHER.

INTERCESSION in favour of other persons is, no doubt, highly advantageous to ourselves; as it tends naturally to increase in our minds a charitable and pious disposition; the greatest of all graces and virtues, and the most efficacious means of bringing down the divine blessing on our head, both in this world, and that which is to come.

But

But though these are great benefits arising from so virtuous an exercise, and sufficient, surely, to recommend it to all persons, who desire to be good and happy; yet they are neither the only effects to be expected from it, nor are they, indeed, the direct, proper, and natural end which we have in view, when we draw near the throne of the divine Grace, to discharge at once this office of Piety to our Creator, and Charity to our fellow-creatures.

When we pray to God for other men, the direct object of our desires is, surely, their welfare and happiness; as when we pray to him for ourselves, we desire our own. We beg him to bless our parents, wives, children, friends, and even our enemies; because we truly desire, that they may be blessed: and our prayers, we hope, are the way, or one way at least, to obtain for them this inestimable
treas-

treasure, the favour and mercy of the Almighty.

But it may be said, that Almighty God, being righteous and just, must deal with every person according to his desert: when we intercede, therefore, for the good and virtuous, our prayers are superfluous; and when we pray for the wicked, our application must be in vain.

But, alas! what are our vaunted virtues, that call for rigid justice? We have deserved very little besides shame and punishment: and if our Judge should be *extreme*, as the Scripture speaks, *to mark* Ps. cxxx. *what is done amiss, who may abide it?* ^{3.}

Is it for us to require such exact measure; and shut out the overflowings of the divine mercy? Has the Lord of all things fewer rights, than any earthly master? who having been first just, has leave to be liberal; and after he hath left

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no service without a fit recompense, may

Matt. xx. *do what he will with his own.*
15.

But you think, perhaps, that it would be a more eminent exercise, if not of justice strictly speaking, yet of government; if the supreme and perfect Ruler would not make use of such arbitrary rights, as weak men delight in; but according to the absolute Rectitude of his nature, would be pleased to confine himself to the precise rule of right; making the felicity of every moral agent throughout the Universe most accurately proportionable to his improvement in the quality of virtue.

Job xxv.
5, 6.

Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in his sight: how much less man, that is a worm! yet can we sit and dictate to that wisdom, which reacheth from everlasting to everlasting; with scarce a meaning to the orders we
issue

issue out, and in the most profound ignorance of what is good, or may at all be possible!

Nothing is to be given to any moral agent, but for his merit! He is to be *made*, I suppose, without it. His creation, and the faculties proper for his nature, are capital gifts, and the foundation of all that are to follow; yet these you will allow to be conferred *for nothing*; or, at least, for nothing that he himself can have done to purchase them. This, we perceive, you consent to; because from the nature of the thing, in this case, your rule is not applicable.

But you require all moral agents to be created in the same *rank*; and endowed with equal powers and faculties at first, till they shall have raised themselves by their behaviour?

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That may happen to be long. And in the mean time there may be left a vast void of Being, where superiour faculties may even be wanted, might however be possessed, and well applied also, to the immense increase of the sum of universal felicity, and even virtue. So that while you are thus a friend to virtue in appearance, you put a stop to the most magnificent display of the divine powers, to the profusion of bliss, and wide extent and infinite multiplication of that very moral excellence, which you are so assiduous to advance.

But moral creatures of the same rank and class of Being, these at least, you are sure, ought to be treated all in the same manner, and distinguished only after they have deserved it?

All *men*, for example, should be endowed with equal capacities of body and
mind,

mind, and have the same advantages of education, fortune, health, pious parents, and good examples? But we find men do differ in these things, and in many others, which must have great influence on their condition, even in the world to come, as far as we can judge, if we judge by their improvements in piety and virtue.

We make no scruple to thank Almighty God for the light of the Gospel, and for the happiness, we think, we have in being born in a Christian country; and we persuade ourselves without any difficulty, that our lot is the more favourable on this account with respect to this world, and especially that which is to come. Yet all other men have not this advantage. The greatest part of men that have yet been born, died before the Gospel was preached; and the greatest part of those who are now alive, it is probable, have hardly ever heard of it.

So

So that you see, how excellent soever your rule may seem to be, there must be some flaw in it: for Almighty God appears not to guide himself by it; and yet we make no doubt but he doth right, and acts both wisely and equitably.

Would you carry the objection any further? Yes, it is just possible to add, allowances may be made for all these inequalities at the day of Judgment; so that finally, and upon the whole, nothing may prevail but virtue; and that be weighed and rewarded with the utmost impartiality and exactness.

And what do you infer from this? not surely, *That no one can receive either benefit or disadvantage from any person besides himself.* The poor man, we hope, will be considered for his patience, when he appears before the great Tribunal: And is it therefore no charity to relieve him? Is there

there no harm done in the world by ill examples, because the strength of this temptation, and of every other, will one day be attended to? Can I do no man any good upon earth, because he is hereafter to be judged with justice? What is it then we live for? or why have we in Scripture so many exhortations to good works, to alms-giving, to hospitality, to mercy; to feed the hungry, clothe the naked; to visit the sick and imprisoned, the fatherless and the widow in their affliction? How, indeed, should I exercise or cultivate the grace of *charity* within my own breast, if I know that it can have no object? Or why so much as think even of *justice*, if no man can ever be the worse for me?

Such a conclusion therefore as this,
That no one can receive good or harm from any person's actions but his own, whatever maxim it be deduced from, must be

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wrong:

wrong: it is either not true, or we are to think and act as if it were not.

Since Almighty God hath put our happiness in the power of each other, to so great a degree as we see he hath; he may have done the same thing further, or in other instances. If he is pleased visibly to make use of our good will and kindness, as his instrument in conferring on other persons so many and such important benefits; he may use our service here too, if he sees fit; and to our endeavours may require us to add also our prayers for their advantage. And our intercessions with him may be as much the regular and necessary means of obtaining for them some blessings; as our labour or benefactions are the means, by which they become possessed of others.

The world is God's world; and the course of nature is what he makes it,

Yet

Yet sometimes a poor man is left to want bread, you *see*, except you give it him; and mercy, for aught you *know*, except you ask it for him.

Upon the whole therefore it appears, first, That the *prayers* of pious persons have an influence with that great Being to whom they are addressed, and an efficacy in obtaining what is desired of him; though there may, no doubt, be reasons of such weight in some instances, as to obstruct the success of their petitions: and secondly, That the *intercessions* of good men, their most retired and unknown applications to God in favour of other persons, may be of real advantage, not only to those who make them, but to those also who are so happy as to be the subjects of their intercession.

very old in the land, and money, for aught you knew, except bread, your life except you give it him; but sometimes a poor man is left to want

S E R M O N VIII.

PHILIP. iv. 6.

BE CAREFUL FOR NOTHING; BUT IN
EVERY THING BY PRAYER AND
SUPPLICATION, WITH THANKS-
GIVING, LET YOUR REQUESTS BE
MADE KNOWN UNTO GOD.

THE design of *general* prayers for
God's blessing and protection is
scarce conceivable, unless we suppose
that the petition hath some power and
efficacy to obtain that which is desired;
but the design of *particular* requests, or
such as fix on a determinate object, is,

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with-

without this supposition, utterly unintelligible.

Rom. i.
9, &c.

God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the Gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you; always in my prayers making request, (if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God,) to come unto you: for I long to see you.—What earnestness is here in the Apostle! agitated between fear and hope, and struggling, as it were, with God, to try, if possibly, after so much delay, and many disappointments, he might at length obtain what he had desired so earnestly!

Far be it from us to depreciate the duty of *resignation* to the divine will; as it was very far from St. Paul's intention to suggest any thing in disparagement of this sublime virtue. Yet, surely, we may venture to affirm, that it would be
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an imperfect account of the design of these unceasing supplications which were made by the Apostle, to say, *That he was expressing his confidence in God, and assured expectation, with a sincere consent on his part, that he would do what was best, and by the properest and most effectual means promote the greatest good;** as in other things, so particularly in all that might relate to this journey to Rome. For is it not plain, that he represents his prayers on this subject, and his constancy and perseverance in them, as endeavours on his part, and means which he made use of for the accomplishment of his desires? *He made request, he tells the Romans, if by any means, it might be the will of God that he might come unto them.*

There was given to me, saith the same 2Cor.xiii. Apostle in another place, a thorn in the 7, 8. flesh,

* *Abernethy on the Divine Attributes. Vol. II. S. 11. pag. 409. Printed at London, 1746.*

flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice. How? with what purpose? was it only that he might learn to confide in him? or give his consent to suffer? Take his own words: For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, THAT IT MIGHT DEPART FROM ME.

It is not asserted, that such prayers are always granted: but you see in what terms, and with what view they are made; and that by the best of men, whose examples are recorded in Scripture.

Well then, it may be said, (for Philosophy is apt to be disputatious,) if you are not content with expressing your consent and confidence that God will do what is best; you desire him, perhaps, to do otherwise; you ask him to do what is *not best*: and whether, answer me, do you hope, or do you wish to prevail with him?

I answer, that God will do what is best, whether we consent or no, and whether we pray or no; and though we should resist, or blaspheme him: that is, he will do what will be *then* best; what will be fittest for him to do, in that case; upon supposition that we do nothing, or nothing but what is wrong. But without our pious endeavours, and earnest prayers too, that best which he will do, will not be the best for us, we are sure, nor so good, perhaps, as it might be even for other persons.

It is not the design of prayer, we are told, to persuade the supreme Being to alter his measures: and, we may be assured, that by the properest and most effectual means he will promote the greatest good. †*

Blessed be his name; it is his care. The Universe is too large an object, for us to have in view in our conduct. It

is

* *Aber. pag. 412.*

† *Aber. pag. 409.*

is for us, to discharge the duties of our station, and all will be well.

And if we will not discharge our duty, all will still be well. The infinite Wisdom may bring good out of evil. Our vice, and misery, and that of others whom we have ruined, may be all made to contribute in his hands to this great end of *good*. Yet, surely, it is in our power, it is our duty, it is his will, that we should *not* contribute to the general good in this manner; but in another; by our virtue, and piety, and devotion; by doing what good we are able, and looking up to him for protection, and calling out to him for assistance. And we may hope, that such a conduct as this, under the government of his providence, will contribute also, and as much, at least, as our vices or punishment would have done, to the end you speak of, the greatest general good. And at the same time we
have

have the comfort to know, that our virtue and piety will do good to ourselves; and, we trust, to others; as it is written, *Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art, Job xxxv. and thy righteousness may profit the son of man.* ^{8.}

Hezekiah was sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah came to him, and said, Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live. Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed. — And it came to pass, afore Isaiah was gone out into the middle court, that the word of the Lord came to him, saying, Turn again and tell Hezekiah, Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee. On the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the Lord. And I will add unto thy days fifteen years. ^{2 Kings xx. 1, &c.}

Did Hezekiah's prayer persuade the supreme Being to alter his measures?

Besides

Besides the addition to his own term of life, his supplications seem to have procured also favour for his people. *I will add unto thy days fifteen years; and I will deliver thee, and this city out of the hand of the King of Assyria.*

It is added, *And I will defend this city, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.* The piety even of King David also comes in, you see, as some reason still, so long, long after his death, for mercy to the Jews, and the protection of Jerusalem.

Where then are all our calculations of human merit, and God's goodness? proportions between our scanty virtue, and the fulness of Him that is able, and willing too, to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we, not only deserve, but ask, or think? What is the measure of his bounty, whose mercy reacheth unto the heavens, and

Eph. iii.
20.

Pf. lvii.
11.

and his *salvation from generation to generation?* Hai. li. 8.

Is it not enough, that we know so much of his thoughts and providence, that he is *slow to anger, and of great kindness?* Nehem. ix. 17. Jonah iv. 2. Ezek. xviii. 31, 32. Luke xv. 7, 10. Ezra ix. 13. 2 Cor. 4. 17. condemns unwillingly, forgives with joy; *punisheth us less than our iniquities deserve*, and for a little service, or a *light affliction, that is but for a moment*, repays us with *a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory?*

When we are sure, he will do us no wrong; let us allow him to be as liberal as he pleases, and to whom he sees fit: not imitating the rebellious, and afterwards repining, Prophet; who would readily have been the messenger of God's wrath, but for the fear of becoming the minister of his mercy. Because sixscore thousand persons that were innocent, and many more, probably, that were penitent,

Jonah iv. nitent, perished not; *it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry; complaining to his Maker, even of his goodness, and reproaching him with his disposition to forgive: O Lord, was not this my saying? I knew, that thou art a gracious God and merciful. Therefore, now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die, than to live.*

Happy, happy is it for us, that our Judge and Lord is not man; mean, and petulant, revengeful, inexorable, and cruel: bearing in mind the offences, perhaps the slips and follies of his creatures for ever, and treasuring up all their infirmities against the day of vengeance.

Yet the noble, or the tender hearted, even among men, relax and soften at the miseries, at the supplications of those, who are brought down and humbled before

fore them: and if they must not pardon,
punish with a tear.

How much more is the Lord nigh Ps. 145.
unto all them that call upon him, that call
upon him faithfully. He will fulfil the desire
of them that fear him; he will hear their
cry, and will help them.

*Thou shalt call, and the Lord shall answer; Isai. lviii.
thou shalt cry, and he shall say, here I am. 9.*

*Nay, it shall come to pass, saith the Lord, Isai. lxxv.
that before they call, I will answer; and ^{24.}
whiles they are yet speaking, I will hear.*

*My thoughts are not your thoughts, nei- Isai. lv.
ther are your ways my ways, saith the Lord: ^{8, 9.}
for as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways, and
my thoughts than your thoughts.*

All the regard that is on earth from
one man towards another, the fidelity of a
friend,

friend, the pity of a father, the fond solicitude of the most tender mother for her offspring, do but faintly represent the love of God to Men. And is it a wonder, that their very desires and wishes are before him, their wants weighed in his balance, their tears numbered in his book?

Isai. xlix.
14, &c.

Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea; they may forget: yet will I not forget thee.

Isai. lxiii.
15.

Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness, and of thy glory: where is thy zeal, and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels, and of thy mercies towards me? are they restrained? Doubtless, thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel ac-
know-

knowledge us not: Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer.

You see, both what professions Almighty God condescends to make of his good will to men; and with what zealous importunity pious persons at all times have called upon him in prayer, by a multitude of titles laying claim to his attention. And were they only endeavouring to work upon their own temper and affections? Did they hope for nothing directly from him, of whom they asked so much? Or were their hopes vain and groundless? and these holy persons ignorant of the true nature and design of prayer? Is there no real foundation in Religion for the expectations they seem to have entertained? and were these Prophets and Saints, with respect to the efficacy of their petitions, in no better condition than the idolatrous worshippers of the god Baal? *They cried*

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aloud,

1 Kings
xviii. 28.

aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them: but there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.

Be as good and virtuous as you please, as you can: the more good you do, the more you shall receive. Nothing will be lost: not the smallest particle of your Piety and Virtue shall fall to the ground and perish; but all be safely laid up for you in the *book of God's remembrance*.

But being sure to receive, yourselves, an ample and abundant recompense for every possible degree of your own goodness; suffer the overflowings of his bounty to reach even to the less deserving; to those perhaps whose calamities alone recommend them to his pity, or for whom nothing can be alleged, that you know of, but that they desire to be forgiven. Call him not too strictly to account

count for his condescensions: give him leave to be liberal, even without rule: and let *the dogs be fed with the crumbs, that fall from their master's table.* Matt. xv. 27.

Or, if he must apologize for this redundancy of his mercy, he hath already done it. *Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine:* while I forgive thy brother's faults, can I forget thy obedience? being witness of my goodness, rely at least upon my justice: add to thy many virtues, this highest grace of kindness to the undeserving, and divine joy at their amendment. *It is meet, that we should make merry and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.* Luke xv. 31, 32.

S E R M O N IX.

ISAIAH liii. 12.

HE BARE THE SIN OF MANY, AND
MADE INTERCESSION FOR THE
TRANSGRESSORS.

IN the charitable and holy exercise of Intercession, Christians may mutually confer and receive the same kindness; and by means of this happy interchange of pious offices, each person reap the benefit of the devotions of all.

The efficacy also of our devout applications to the common Father of us all is increased by their union: so that we

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may

may safely adopt the Preacher's maxim,
 Eccl. iv. 12. *If one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.*

Nay, our Lord goes so far, as to ascribe to this union of our requests an efficacy irresistible: *I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask; it shall be done for them of my Father which is in Heaven.*
 Matt. xviii. 19.

There is something in Intercession so peculiarly pleasing to Almighty God, and prevalent with him; that a good man will obtain more, it almost seems, for another, than he is able to do by the most importunate application for himself.

The Angels, that were sent to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, brought forth Lot, and said, *Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou*
 Gen. xix.

thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed. And Lot said unto them, Oh not so, my Lord; behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die: Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one; Oh let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live. And he said unto him, See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing, that I will not overthrow this city, for the which thou hast spoken.

What an instance is this of the power of prayer! a city, and such a city, saved from destruction, snatched, as it were, from under the impending stroke, by no amendment or repentance of the inhabitants, but by the violence of prayer, and against the will, if we might dare to say it, of the Divine Avenger. *Haste thee,*

says he, *escape thither; for I cannot do any thing, till thou be come thither.* The hands, you see, of the Host of Heaven are bound down by the predominant authority of a good man's petitions: *I CANNOT do any thing, till thou be come thither.*

And yet, this very Lot himself; (and wonder not; or rather, wonder indeed, as you must, when you contemplate those judgments which are *unsearchable*; but let not your astonishment extinguish your religion, but inflame and strengthen it: This very Lot himself,) so just, so righteous, so powerful with God, was yet indebted for his own life to the intercessions of another person. For thus it is written, *It came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt.*

But

But the power of prayer and intercession appears with still more dignity in the example of Moses; who so often stepped in between the people of Israel, and their incensed Lord, and averted the punishment prepared for their most incorrigible obstinacy. The supreme Being sometimes, like one whose power was subject to the control of another, begs, and, I had almost said, bribes this holy man not to interpose his irresistible intercession, but permit him to take vengeance: *Let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them; and I will make of thee a great nation.* Exod. xxxii. 10.

And at another time, when this Divine wrath had broken forth, *Moses said, take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar:—And Aaron took, as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and behold, the plague was begun* Numb. xvi. 46, 47, 48.

begun among the people; and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people: And he stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was stayed. No studied pomp of description ever reached the majesty and terror comprised in these few plain words; He stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed.

There is but one Intercessor, that can be named after the illustrious example of Moses; and that is He, of whom Moses was the servant and the type; that great High Priest and Sacrifice, who is

Heb. viii. *the mediator of a better covenant; and who,*
 6.
 Heb. ix. *not by the blood of goats and calves, but by*
 12. *his own blood entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption*
 Heb. ix. *for us. Once, in the end of the world bath*
 26. *he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice*
 Heb. vii. *of himself: yet he ever liveth to make in-*
 25. *tercession.*

Here,

Here, here then must you look, if you would behold the efficacy of intercession in it's full light and glory. Here is an intercession, by the virtue of which all other intercessions, all prayers, and all good works are accepted, and sins forgiven.

Look up to the cross; and there you may behold One interposing between a world of sinners and the sentence of everlasting condemnation.

But *wherefore art thou red in thine* Isai. lxiii.
apparel? and thy garments like him that ^{2.}
treadeth in the wine-fat? I have troden the
wine-press alone; — the wine-press of the Rev. xix.
fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. ^{15.}

See, on him falls all the punishment of the innumerable offences of all. *All* Isai. liii.
we, like sheep, have gone astray; and the Lord ^{6.}
hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He
suffers,

suffers, when we have sinned; and dies, that we may live.

X
Bring hither your objections to the divine government, your mighty demonstrations concerning man's merit, and the utter insignificance of every other consideration or offering. Weary of disputing, come, lay all your difficulties upon this altar; and they will be consumed at once in the flame of Love.

Ephes. iii. 18. Consider, not only the measure, or rather the *length and breadth* immeasurable, of the Redeemer's love to men; but also the freedom and generosity of his affection. It was *while we were yet sinners, that Christ died for us*. We had not deserved so much kindness, nor any; but on the contrary, were *enemies* to him by our evil deeds, when he undertook and accomplished, at the expense of his own blood, this astonishing redemption.

Nay,

Nay, even more: — and yet what more can be done, or can be imagined than this; to suffer, and to die for the love of those that hate us? — He, the Redeemer of men, was not by his nature liable to this suffering and sorrow. He was in *glory with the Father, before the world was;* John xvii. *he was with God, and was God:* but he John i. 1. became man: he assumed our nature, that he might be capable of it's calamities; and took on him a body, on purpose to be crucified. He breaks through the limits and natural distinction of Beings, and is driven to the necessity of this most astonishing of all miracles, that it might be possible to suffer pain, and want, and ignominy; to be afflicted and scorned; to undergo all the calamities incident to the most unfortunate of our species, all the exquisite torments which the most criminal can incur: and from men; from men, insensible and blind. But he pities, and still loves you. Your
injustice

injustice and cruelty make no alteration in his heart: though his strength may fail with his wounds, his affection is still vigorous: as he hangs bleeding on the cross, in agonies beyond utterance, which separate his soul from the body, and will deliver him soon from all you can do; hearken! his breath expires in intercessions for you; *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.*

Luke
xxiii. 34.

And will you do nothing now in return, or in acknowledgement at least of so much kindness? — Yes; what is proper for us to do? — *Live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world;* it is the very lesson, which, the Apostle tells us, *the grace of God which bringeth salvation teacheth:* discharge your duty to God, your neighbour, and yourselves; and in general, keep God's commandments. — This, indeed, is doing a great deal; and may imply many things, that will

Titus ii.
12.

ver. 11.

will be laborious and difficult to us. —
And should you not be willing to submit to labour and difficulties; when at the same time that you express your gratitude to the Redeemer, you are concurring with him in his designs for your everlasting salvation?

But come; since you are so much afraid of hardships in religion, there is a way, known indeed to few, one secret way of avoiding them.

How? and yet be saved?

Or else, I am sure, the secret will be worth little. But you are too well instructed in sound principles of piety, to think there can be any safe way of obtaining a share in that happiness which the Redeemer has purchased, without submitting to the burden of obeying his commandments. However, you are desirous

firous to hear it: in a word, it is Love. Love him; and then your obedience will be no *burden* to you. The commands of Christ must be obeyed: but you may be eased of what is troublesome and difficult in this obedience, if you can get your heart touched with this divine affection.

Observe what a wonderful effect this sentiment of love is capable of producing in those persons, whose hearts are tender, and susceptible of deep impressions: how great an alteration it makes, not only in the course of their conduct, but in their very sensations and judgment. They think nothing too much, which they can do, or undergo, for the sake of the beloved person. They give up their own inclination and interest, even with pleasure. The hardest things become easy, the most irksome offices delightful, near the object of their affection. They are
not

not tired of their affiduities, or greedy of any recompense for them: happy, so long as they are able to please; and amply rewarded in the very performance, and the kind acceptance of their services.

How unlike are those who serve for hire! No matter how little they do, provided you will but be content with it. There is in their motions a sluggishness, a reluctance, that perpetually demands the spur. In brief, they are not serving you, but themselves: neither side is pleased: your business is but ill discharged; and their employment is one continual struggle against difficulties.

Many excellent things have been spoken, and very justly, of many excellent graces and virtues: but there is none of them to be compared with that, which is here recommended to you. It is *the* Matt. xxii. 38.
first and great commandment: it is that, on
 I which

Matt.
xxii. 40.

which hang all the law and the prophets;
and that, finally, on which above all things
your own happiness depends.

Ecclus.
xxv. 7, &c.

*There be nine things, which I have judged
in mine heart to be happy; and the tenth I
will utter with my tongue. A man that hath
joy of his children, and he that liveth to see
the fall of his enemy; that dwelleth with a
wife of understanding, and that hath not
slipped with his tongue; that hath not served
a man more unworthy than himself; that
hath found prudence; that speaketh in the
ears of him that will hear: how great is he
that findeth wisdom? and none (of these) is
above him that feareth the Lord: but the
LOVE of the Lord passeth all things; he
that holdeth it, to whom shall he be likened?*

To none indeed on earth: but he may
be likened to those happy Spirits above,
that encompass the throne of God; who
seeing him as he is, are filled with his
love,

love, and with the light of his countenance. And he shall be joined in due time to their society; and with them worship, serve, and possess, the supreme Object of his affections; the source and author of every thing, that is fair, and good, and lovely; and the boundless ocean, to which it all returns, and in which it will be swallowed up, and yet not lost, for ever.

S E R M O N X.

M A T T. vi. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.

AFTER THIS MANNER THEREFORE
PRAY YE: OUR FATHER, WHICH
ART IN HEAVEN; HALLOWED BE
THY NAME; THY KINGDOM COME;
THY WILL BE DONE IN EARTH, AS
IT IS IN HEAVEN; GIVE US THIS
DAY OUR DAILY BREAD; AND FOR-
GIVE US OUR DEBTS, AS WE FOR-
GIVE OUR DEBTORS; AND LEAD
US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT
DELIVER US FROM EVIL; FOR
THINE IS THE KINGDOM, AND
THE POWER, AND THE GLORY,
FOR EVER. AMEN.

OF all the applications to the su-
preme Being which are extant,
I 3 and

and are of a general nature, not receiving an additional force from the uncommon or moving circumstances of those who made them; this now before us, the Prayer of our Lord, is undoubtedly the best, being at the same time the most rational, and the most devout. It would have been so esteemed by all judges, if the name of it's author had been never known to us: so that whether we have an eye to the preaching, or the prayer of our Redeemer, the observation is equally just, *That never man spake like this man.*

John vii.
46.

Our Lord's prayer, as it is usually observed, consists of six petitions: yet of these six, the three first can hardly be called by that name; being more properly acts or expressions of Adoration, Obedience, Submission; by which we render honour to the Divine Being, and give up ourselves, along with the whole
crea-

creation, to his government and disposal; before we presume to offer any requests in our own favour, even for the supply of our most necessary wants, or the forgiveness of our sins.

There is a propriety in this. The inhabitants of Heaven, when *they* worship him that liveth for ever and ever, cast their crowns before his throne, saying; *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created: they rest not day and night, saying, holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.* Rev. iv. 10, 11. ver. 8.

And although in this present state of infirmity and want, it is very allowable for us, and our duty to let our *requests be made known unto God*, and to join our supplications to our thanksgivings; yet let us take care that they be so joined. It will be unbecoming, and argue a very wrong disposition of mind in us, if we never

draw near to the throne of grace, but in our distress ; and having received so many benefits, remember nothing in the the Divine Presence, but our necessities alone.

God is the *Father* of the Universe : all nature owes it's being and support to Him.. He bears a nearer degree of the same relation to all spiritual Beings, endowed with intelligence, and capable of virtue ; who have received a greater portion of his kindness and care ; and shew, or may do, a stronger resemblance of their Divine Parent. Of man in particular it is said, that he was created *in the image of God*, and he is styled his *son*. A good man may with still better hopes make use of this endearing appellation ; and a good Christian above all : He is *born again, from above*, by the operation of the same Divine Spirit, by which the Eternal Word was incarnate, and became

Gen. i.

26.

Luke iii.

38.

John iii.

3.

came the Redeemer of men: and he is made *an heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ*: by whom he is taught and authorized, as he is prompted by that Spirit, to lay claim to the relation, and in his applications to the Maker of all things, to say:

ABBA, *Father*; Thou author, preserver, support, of my being, life, hopes, and happiness; who hast brought me into this world, thy work; and redeemed me by thy only begotten Son, through thy Holy Spirit, to an eternal inheritance in Heaven; I acknowledge thy authority, and thy affection, with reverence and gratitude: I own thy paternal power and tenderness, and approach thy presence with the sentiments of a son; with fear, and love, and joy. Thus emboldened, I raise my thoughts from earth to heaven; I look up to that celestial seat, where thou hast dwelt from eternity,
en-

enthroned in majesty above all height, and clothed with light which no eye can bear to behold. But though thy glory is unsearchable, and I cannot see thee as thou art; yet so much, at least, I can discern of thee by thy image, expressed in thy word, and reflected from thy works; that thou art great, and just, Lev. x. 3. and holy. Thou wilt be *sanctified in them that come nigh thee*. Thou requirest truth in the hearts of thy worshippers; and that the lips which presume to utter thy hallowed name, be free both from impurity and fraud. May the number be multiplied without measure, of such Mal. i. ii. as present this *incense to thy name, and a pure offering*: and Oh! that my voice also might be heard among those, who thus adore thee! But alas! we have been enemies to our God; rebels to thy rightful sway: we have followed the dictates of pride and passion; have been seduced by the Tempter, led astray by our own

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own corrupt mind, or by the wiles of others; and thy world hath lain under the power of the *evil one*: how long, O Eph. ii. 2. Lord, Holy and True? The time will surely come, (let it come speedily!) when thy just dominion shall be universally acknowledged, in every region, by every heart; when Thou shalt reign unrivalled in all thy works; and the usurped authority of that Apostate Spirit, which divides and deforms thy kingdom, be utterly destroyed for ever. In Heaven, thy will is the inviolable law: Myriads of ministers encircle thy throne, who cease not day and night to celebrate and to serve Thee, with uninterrupted praises, and unerring obedience. Oh! that such fidelity were found on earth! that the sons of men did even now resemble that celestial society, to which they hope hereafter to be united! were animated with the like holy ardent zeal, and could give themselves to God with the same entire devo-

devotion! We are blind and vain, but Thou art wise and good. Wise therefore in thy wisdom, secure under thy care, great and happy in humility and subjection, we have no wishes but in Thee. Our whole desire and glory is to be, to do, to suffer whatever Thou art pleased to appoint. During our passage through this perishable state, we trust, and know, that Thou who gavest us life, wilt give us also all such things as are necessary for it's support: and we ask no more. But

John vi.
32, 33.

Oh! leave us not destitute of that *bread, which cometh down from Heaven*. Let our souls be nourished by thy word and ordinances; that we may grow in grace, and be made partakers of a life which will never end. Wealth, fame, and power, be they freely theirs, to whose lot they fall: let our riches be repositied in Heaven: the object of our ambition is the light of thy countenance, even the approbation and applause of God. —

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What have I said? Ah me! can I hope to be justified, when I am judged? dare I trust to that fiery trial? will my life, or will my heart endure the inspection of thy pure eye? But there is mercy with Thee. Let me appeal from the severity of thy Justice, and lay hold on this anchor of my hopes. Pity, where Thou canst not approve; and pardon that, which must offend. Then shall my life bear testimony to my thankful heart; and that gratitude, which extends not to Thee, shall overflow on men. How just is it, that I should shew to them that mercy, which I ask, and want! I bless thee for thy goodness, and I feel the *constraint* of Love; and do now from the 2 Cor. v. bottom of my heart, naked before that ¹⁴ Presence, from which no thought is hid, most freely forgive all those, who by word or deed, knowingly or ignorantly, have offended or have injured me. I relinquish all my claims to vengeance. I bury from this moment, for ever in oblivion,

livion, all offences, and the very remembrance of resentment : And do most ardently desire, that the sense of thy divine and boundless love may kindle in my breast a flame of thankfulness to Thee, which no time can quench ; and an affection to men, which no provocation, no wrongs can conquer. May this principle of love live in my heart, and direct and animate my actions. I am willing it should be called forth and cultivated by exercise and discipline : and whatever trials or sufferings thy wisdom sees fit for this happy end, I cheerfully embrace them. Shew me no hurtful indulgence. I decline no danger for thy glory, for the good of men, for the improvement of my virtue.—Yet remember that I am but dust. Be Thou near me in those perilous moments. Let not the storms of trouble and trial overwhelm me. Strengthen my failing faith. When I sink, stretch forth thy hand. I rely on thy Providence and Grace ; that Thou wilt deliver me from
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the danger, or support me under it. Save me from sin, from the great enemy of souls, and from eternal misery.

These, Lord, are the requests, which my heart pours out unto Thee. But Thou seeest the wants, which it doth not know; Thou hearest the desires, it cannot utter. Give us what is good, though we ask it not: and mercifully deny, when we pray for evil.

My soul falls down with the lowest reverence before thy throne, adding it's little homage to the profound adorations and triumphant Halleluiahs of the whole host of Heaven, and all thy Saints on earth: Power and Honour be to Thee, Dominion and Glory, infinite and everlasting, my Lord, my Father, and my God.

F I N I S.

23 APR 1964

...and from eternal misery.

not : and miserably doing, when we say
Ourselves that is good, though we call it
Tou hear? the thing it cannot utter.
And the waywardness it doth not know;
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Threefold Love, are the requests, which my



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